



# Executive Summary

Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes Toward  
Politics and Public Service

32nd Edition

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Harvard Public Opinion Project

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# INTRODUCTION

Conceived by two Harvard undergraduate students during the winter of 1999, Harvard University's Institute of Politics Survey of Young Americans' Attitudes toward Politics and Public Service began in 2000 as a national survey of 18-to 24- year old college undergraduates. Over the last 17 years, this research project has grown in scope and mission, as this report now includes an analysis of 18- to 29- year olds on a broad set of longitudinal and current events issues.

The first survey of N=800 college undergraduates was completed in the Spring of 2000 and all interviews were conducted over the telephone; since that time, 31 subsequent surveys have been released. Over this period, a number of modifications have been made to the scope and methodology in order to ensure that sampling methods most accurately capture the view of the population of young adults in a manner that will be useful to both the Institute of Politics and the broader research and political communities.

- In 2001, the survey was expanded from N=800 to N=1,200 college students in order to capture a more robust sample of the undergraduate population.
- In 2006, the survey expanded to N=2,400 interviews, as we began interviewing members of the 18- to 24- year-old cohort who were not currently attending a four-year college or university. In addition, because of changing uses of technology among younger Americans, in 2006 the survey moved from a telephone poll to a survey that was administered online.
- In 2009, we expanded our scope a third time to include the population of young adults aged 18 to 29. While we will continue to report on the attitudes and opinions of U.S. college students, this change in our research subject was made to allow for better and more direct comparisons to the broader set of election and general public opinion research tracking data, which tends to track the 18- to 29-year-old demographic group. Our fall political tracking surveys will include samples of N=2,000, while the spring semester's research will be more in-depth and include N=3,000 interviews. All of our interviews are conducted in English and Spanish. Using GfK (formerly Knowledge Networks) as our research partner, IOP surveys use RDD and Address-Based Sampling (ABS) frames and are administered online (see Appendix).

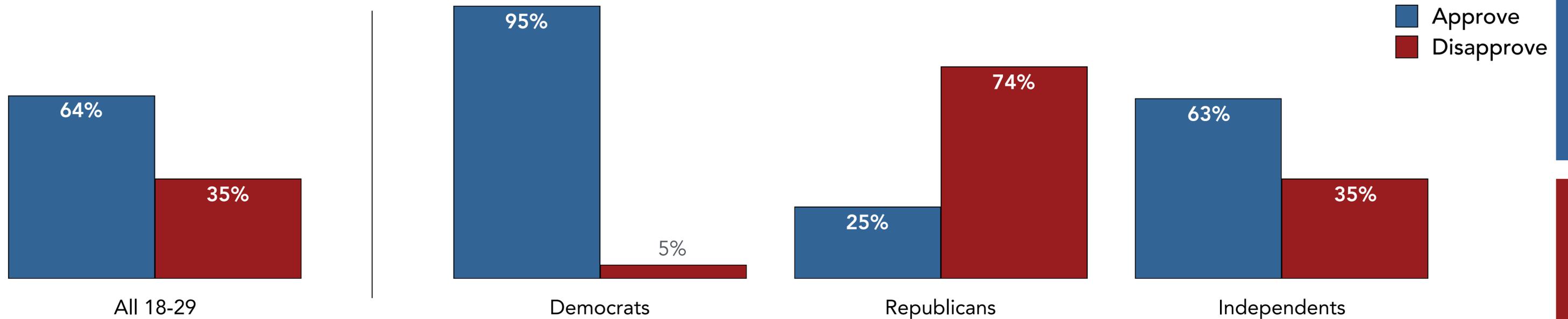
This abbreviated poll is in conjunction with the IOP's National Campaign for Political and Civic Engagement Conference that will host 60 college students from across the country to discuss community-based tactics to reconnect America on February 3-5 at the IOP. The interviewing period for this survey of N=771 18- to 29- year olds was January 20 to January 22, 2017. The margin of error for the poll is +/- 4.0 percentage points at the 95 percent confidence level. The interviewing period began hours after President Trump's inauguration and lasted through the weekend.

Harvard IOP Polling Director John Della Volpe supervised the survey group of undergraduates. As always, the Harvard Public Opinion Project would like to thank IOP Director Maggie Williams, IOP Chair of the 2017 National Campaign Conference Bill Delahunt, Amy Howell, Joe Kearns Goodwin, Chazy Dowaliby and Mary Cappabianca for their insight and support over the course of this and all IOP projects.

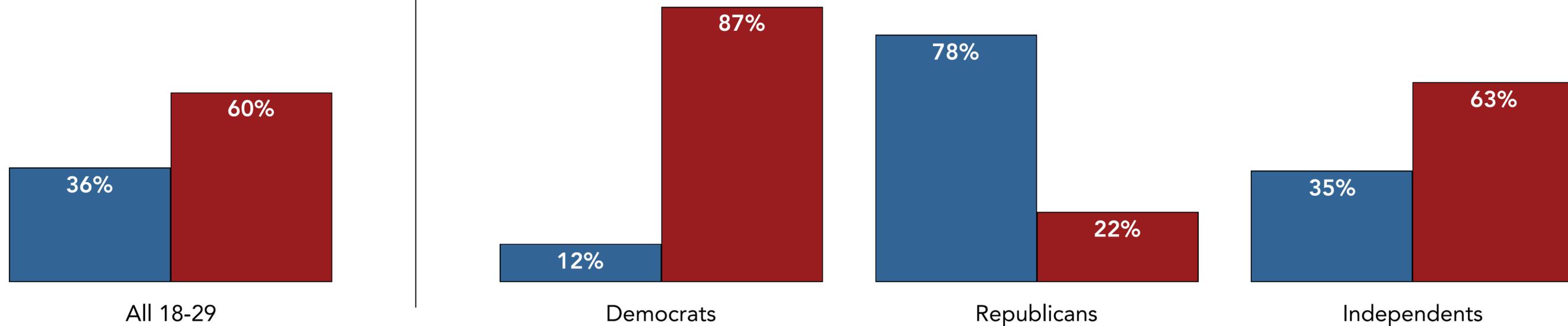
# KEY FINDINGS

# OBAMA APPROVAL TOPS 60% FOR 1ST TIME WITH STRONG PERFORMANCE AMONG INDEPENDENTS; APPROVAL OF TRUMP TRANSITION 36%

In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of Barack Obama as President?

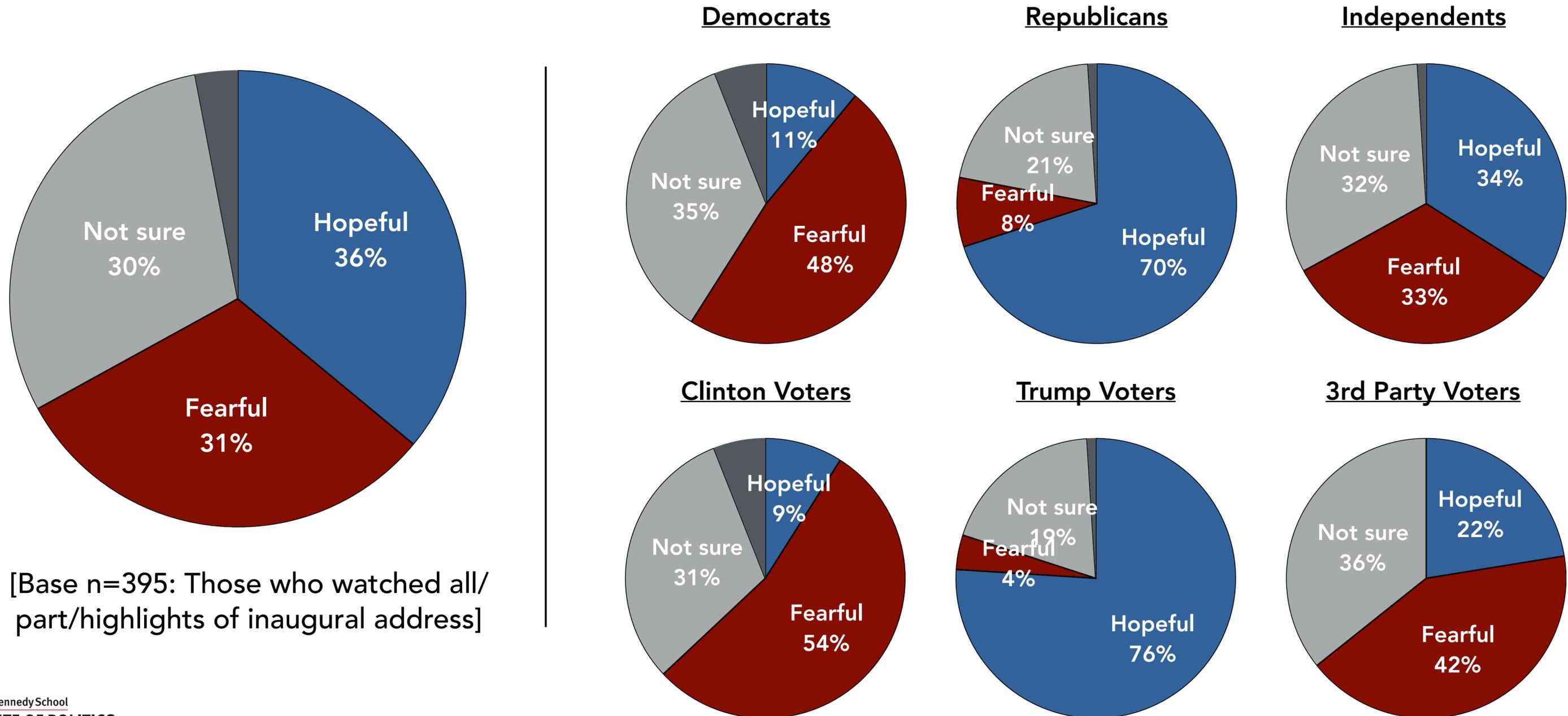


In general, do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of Donald Trump during the presidential transition, since he was elected in November?



# BY NEARLY 10:1, YOUNG REPUBLICANS SEE MORE HOPE THAN FEAR IN PRESIDENT TRUMP'S ADDRESS; DEMOCRATS FEARFUL, INDEPENDENTS SPLIT

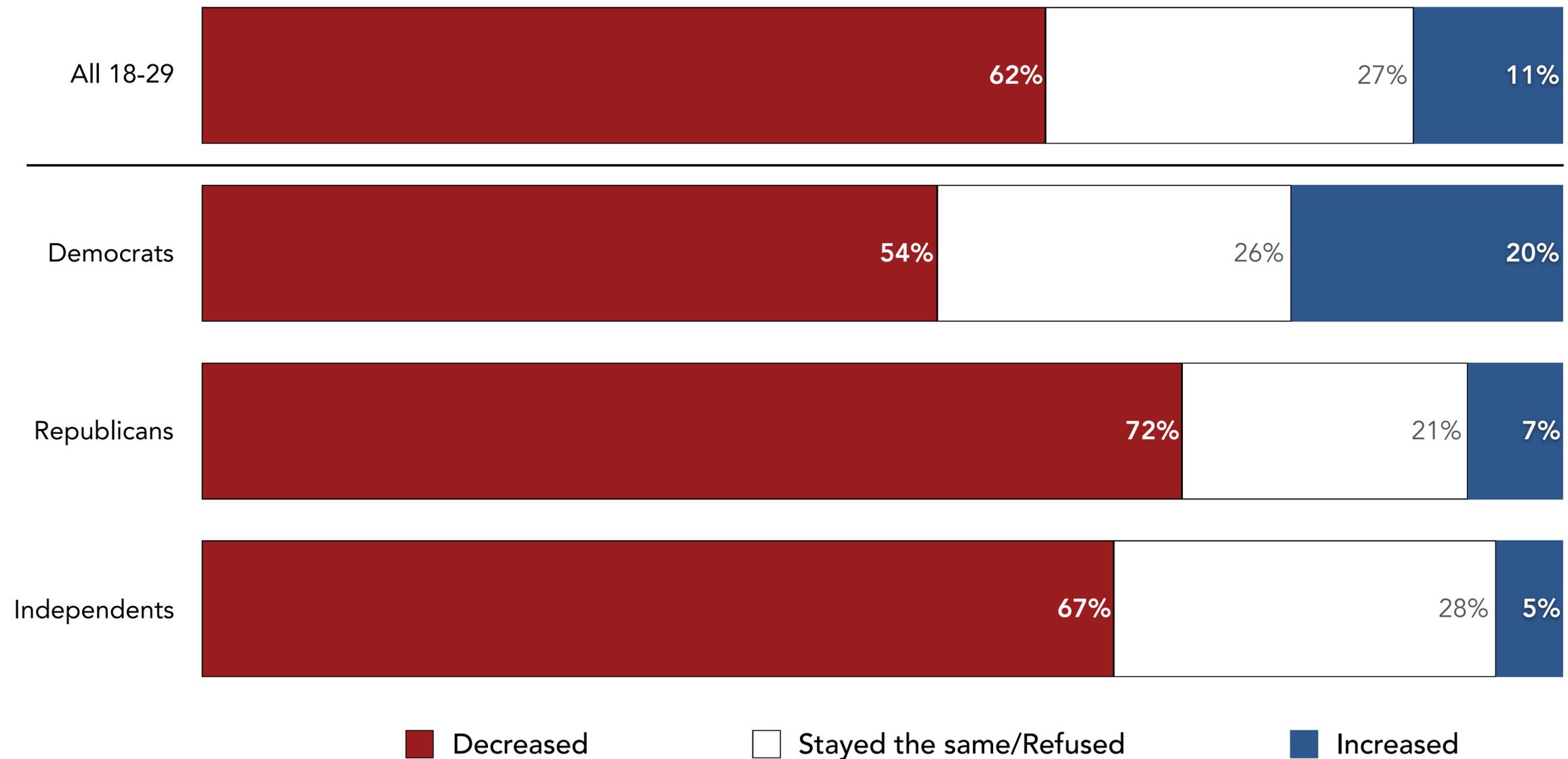
Overall, would you say that President Trump's (inaugural address) speech made you more hopeful or fearful about the future of America?



[Base n=395: Those who watched all/part/highlights of inaugural address]

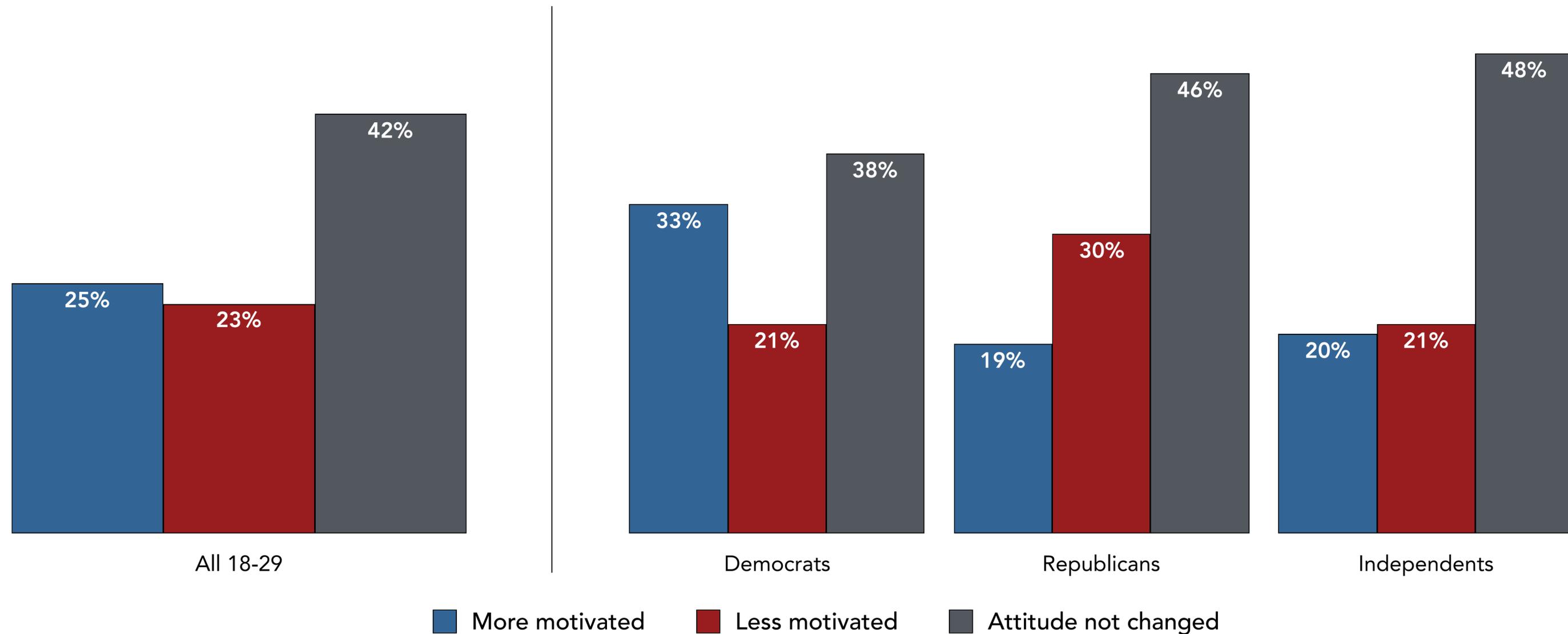
# MAJORITY FROM EACH PARTY BELIEVE OVERALL TONE AND LEVEL OF CIVILITY IN AMERICAN POLITICS HAS DECREASED IN LAST 5 YEARS

Which of the following best reflects your view regarding the overall tone and level of civility in American politics over the last 5 years. Has the level of civility...



# A QUARTER OF ALL YOUNG AMERICANS, ONE-THIRD OF DEMOCRATS SAY THEY ARE MORE MOTIVATED TO GET INVOLVED SINCE LAST ELECTION

Since the last election would you say you are more or less motivated to get involved in politics and public service, or has your attitude not changed?

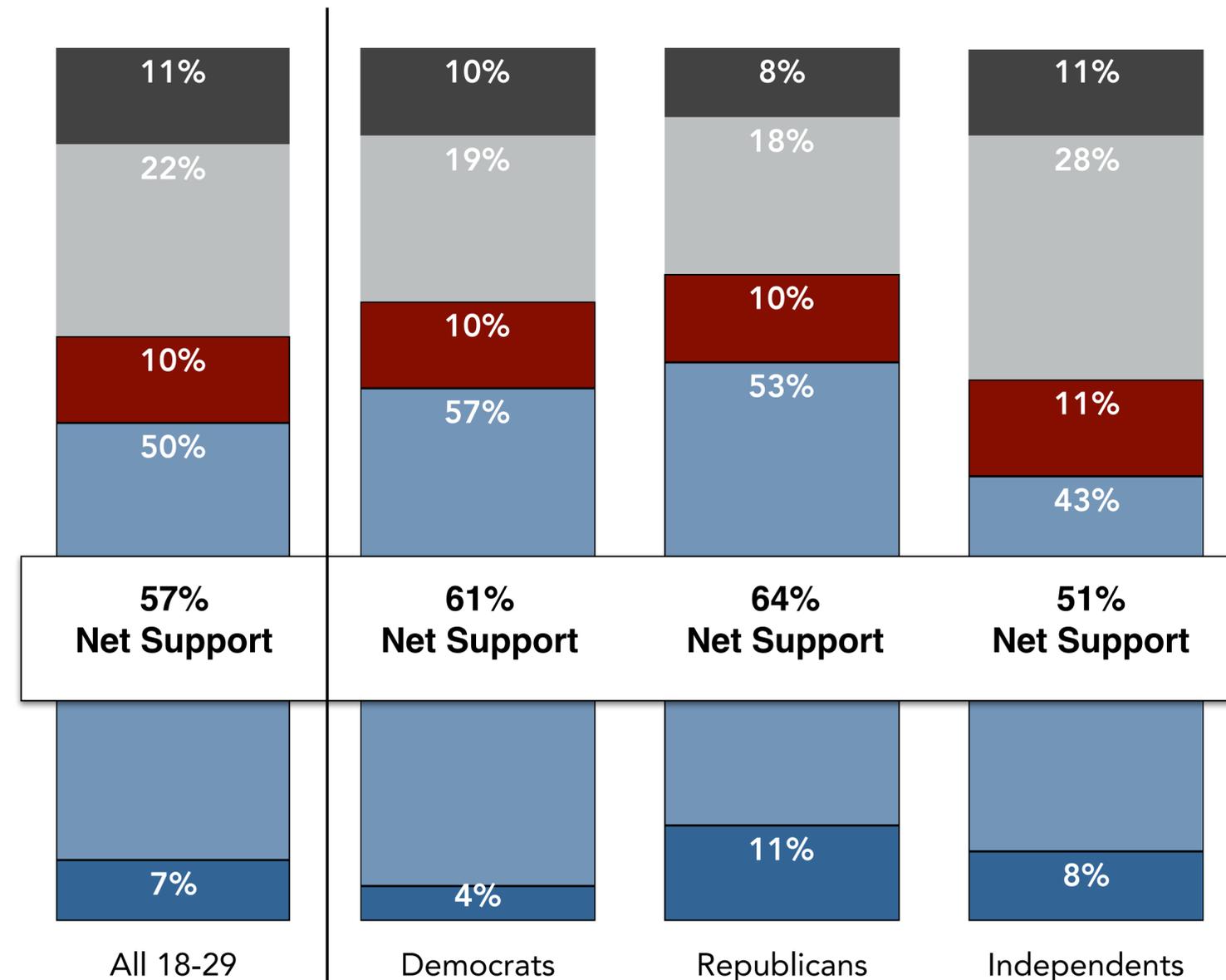


# SOLID MAJORITY OF ALL YOUNG AMERICANS SUPPORT NATIONAL SERVICE, EITHER VOLUNTARY OR MANDATORY

One of the proposals that some have suggested as a way to reconnect Americans and create more civility in our country is enacting legislation that would create a national service program for Americans under the age of 25 that would be linked to student loan forgiveness or other relevant incentives.

National service would mean a period in which all young people were asked to engage in activities that would contribute to the greater good of the country. This service could take the form of military service, domestic improvement programs such as AmeriCorps or City Year, or international programs such as the Peace Corps.

Based on what you know at this time, which of the following statements is closest to your own view?



- Prefer not to answer
- Not sure at this time
- Do not support national service
- Support national service, voluntary
- Support national service, mandatory

# HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL INSTITUTE OF POLITICS

Harvard Kennedy School's Institute of Politics (IOP) was established in 1966 as a memorial to President Kennedy and aims to inspire undergraduates to consider careers in politics and public service. The Institute oversees the John F. Kennedy Jr. Forum, one of the world's premier arenas for political speech, discussion, and debate, and runs a fellowship program offering a unique opportunity for political practitioners to spend semesters at Harvard and interact with students. The IOP also offers dozens of paid internships for eight to ten weeks during the summer; a nonpartisan, quarterly journal written and run entirely by undergraduates; and a unique, nationwide survey project of young adults' political views.

Students are offered wide-ranging opportunities, including internships and conferences intended to provide opportunities for interaction with the people who shape politics and public policy. The IOP does not offer formal courses or degree-granting programs; instead, it provides avenues for practical experience and encourages students to examine critically and think creatively about politics and public issues. For more information, including past results of these polls, please visit us online at [www.iop.harvard.edu](http://www.iop.harvard.edu).



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